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# Buying a Secondhand Sewing Machine

PA-8  
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# Straight Stitch Machines Are the Best Buy

Mrs. Doud was talking to the other women at a sewing center. She had sewed quite a bit. When her husband bought her a second-hand zig-zag machine, she wanted to learn more. She was taking the beginning class so she could teach two neighbor girls how to sew. She was letting them use her old

straight stitch machine. She said "I oiled it, petted it, coaxed it, and now it sews better than my new one." Straight stitch machines are simpler to use, easier to take care of, and less likely to need adjustment than zig-zag machines. They are less expensive, a better buy.

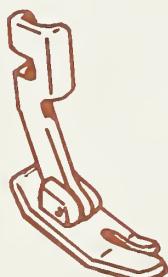
## Look for a Straight Stitch Presser Foot

"My new one does all kinds of fancy things. But it's hard to sew around curves and make darts," Mrs. Doud added. The presser foot on her new machine has a wide opening so the needle can swing back and forth to make the zig-zag stitches. But Mrs. Doud does mostly straight stitching when she makes a dress. "You need a narrow, straight stitch presser foot to make it easier for you to guide the

cloth," the sewing teacher told her.

Next day Mrs. Doud went back to the store where her husband had bought the machine. She was lucky. She could buy a straight stitch presser foot for less than \$2.00. She showed it to the teacher that night. Mrs. Doud said, "I have learned something. I'll tell my friends never to buy any zig-zag machine, old or new, unless it has a straight stitch presser foot with it."

*Straight Stitch  
(narrow)  
Presser Foot*



*Zig-zag Stitch  
(wide)  
Presser Foot*



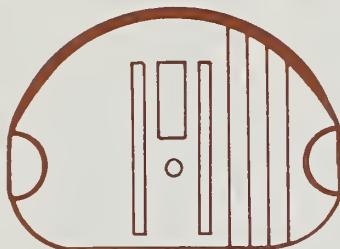
# Look for a Straight Stitch Throat Plate

Mrs. Doud will find that she needs to buy a straight stitch throat plate too. Her thread will bunch when she uses the zig-zag throat plate for straight sewing. Heavy and very lightweight material will go into the wide hole of the zig-zag stitch throat plate and

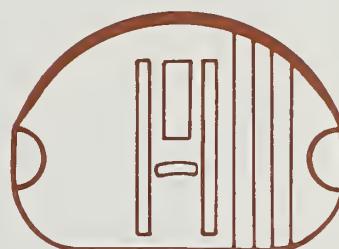
get caught there.

Be sure that a straight stitch throat plate (small needle hole) comes with your machine if the machine is zig-zag. Sometimes you can buy one to fit the machine for about \$2.00 extra.

*Straight Stitch Throat Plate  
(has small needle hole)*



*Zig-zag Stitch Throat Plate  
(has wide needle hole)*



## Try Out the Machine in the Store

Mrs. Thomas is a good hand sewer. She has sewed a little bit on her sister-in-law's machine. She works in a drycleaning shop. Her boss told her if she could learn to put in zippers well enough, he would pay her 75 cents for each one. There is not enough time for her to practice on the machine at work and her sister-in-law has moved. She decided to look for a secondhand sewing machine. She knew she had to have a machine that she could run very slowly.

She took some material and thread with her to the store so she could try out the machine. The salesman said, "All of these machines are in good order. You don't need to try them out." Mrs. Thomas said, "Why can't I try it out if I'm thinking about buying it?" She

didn't try out any machine. She just left the store.

She was discouraged and told Mrs. Cohen about it. Mrs. Cohen said, "You did the right thing. Just walk out. And remember, most good stores have signs saying 'Try Me Before You Buy Me'. Never forget, it's your money you are spending and not the salesman's. You will find a store where they let you try out the machine. First thing you know, you'll be earning that 75 cents for each zipper you put in."

A secondhand sewing machine with a straight stitch can be a very good buy. A treadle machine is very good to learn to sew on. It is easy to take care of. It may be all you'll ever want.

# Before You Buy Any Machine, Try It Out

1. Take some material and thread with you when you go to the store.
2. Thread the top and bobbin. Is it easy to thread?
3. Try out the knee or foot control. Move your chair until you are sitting right in front of the needle. Is the knee control comfortable for you to use? Do you have to reach for it? Can the foot control be moved to the best position for you to use?
4. Try stitching straight seams and around curves. Is the machine easy to handle? Can you run it smoothly? Does it jump? Can you stitch slowly? Can you start and stop the machine easily?

Don't buy the machine if it is hard to guide the cloth, if it runs too fast, or if it is not comfortable to use. Look for another machine.

## Be Sure the Machine Is in Good Condition

Mrs. Cook was thinking about buying her neighbor's old machine. She had sewed on it. It was easy to run. She wondered if she should buy it. It was electric and she was afraid the wiring might be worn out. A friend who knew about electric sewing machines told her to:

1. Be sure no bare wires show. Be sure the insulation around the wires is flexible and not cracked.
2. See that the belt or chain belt is not worn or frayed.
3. Watch that the motor does not spark or smoke when you run it.
4. Be sure that the motor pulley around the hand wheel is not

glazed and hardened. If it is, you'll need a new one. If you buy a machine from a store, the store should give you one.

Home sewing isn't likely to wear out machine parts. But to check, hold the needle bar firmly with your left hand. Rock the hand wheel back and forth with your right hand. The needle bar should start to move as soon as you turn the wheel. It should feel tight.

*Note:* Most store-bought second-hand machines have been reconditioned. These should carry a service warranty for several months. If a machine has just been traded in and has not been serviced, it will cost less, but the store normally will not guarantee its condition.

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